

## Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 LONDON 08766 01 OF 02 121654Z

53

ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-03 SS-20

USIA-15 IO-14 CIEP-02 ACDA-19 DRC-01 /136 W

----- 101631

R 121629Z JUL 74

FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2053

INFO AMEMBASSY DUBLIN

AMCONSUL BELFAST

AMCONSUL LIVERPOOL

AMCONSUL EDINBURGH

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 LONDON 08766

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PFOR, UK, EI

SUBJECT: NORTHERN IRELAND: GROWING PESSIMISM

REF: LONDON 8497

BEGIN SUMMARY. PARLIAMENT AND THE BRITISH PUBLIC HAVE BEEN EXPOSED IN RECENT DAYS TO CONSIDERABLE DEBATE AND SPECULATION ABOUT WHAT HAS BEEN HAPPENING IN NORTHERN IRELAND AND THE DIRECTION IN WHICH BRITISH POLICY SHOULD PROCEED. THE GOVERNMENT IS NOW HEADED TOWARDS HOLDING ELECTIONS TO A CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION WHICH IS TO TRY TO ARRIVE AT SOME AGREED FORM OF GOVERNING NI (REF). THERE IS WIDESPREAD SKEPTICISM THAT THIS COURSE COULD PRODUCE A SOLUTION AND THERE IS CONSIDERABLE PESSIMISM THAT MEANS CAN BE FOUND TO HALT THE CONTINUED DETERIORATION OF THE NI SITUATION. END SUMMARY.

1. IN A COMMONS' DEBATE ON JULY 9, NI SECSTATE MERLYN REES REQUESTED EXTENSION OF THE GOVERNMENT'S AUTHORITY TO DETAIN SUSPECTED TERRORISTS WITHOUT TRIAL. AT THE SAME TIME HE ANNOUNCED PLANS FOR THE SELECTIVE RELEASE OF SOME PRESENT DETAINEES. THE COMMONS' DEBATE YEILDED A CAUTIOUS ACKNOWLEDGEMENT FROM CONSERVATIVE PARTY NI  
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 LONDON 08766 01 OF 02 121654Z

SPOKESMAN IAN GILMOUR THAT BRITAIN'S OPTIONS IN NI ARE

VERY LIMITED AND THAT THE WHITE PAPER PROPOSALS, ALTHOUGH RISKY, WERE ACCEPTABLE. BIPARTISANSHIP ON BRITISH NI POLICY THUS CONTINUES ALTHOUGH THERE ARE SIGNS OF CONSIDERABLE UNEASINESS ABOUT WHERE A CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION MIGHT LEAD.

2. OVER THE PREVIOUS WEEKEND, A BROADLY REPRESENTATIVE GROUP OF ABOUT 170 POLITICIANS, OFFICIALS, ACADEMICS, BUSINESSMEN, LAWYERS AND WRITERS HAD GATHERED AT OXFORD FOR A CONFERENCE SPONSORED BY THE BRITISH IRISH ASSOCIATION. THEY CAME FROM THE REPUBLIC OF IRELAND, ULSTER AND GREAT BRITAIN AND REPRESENTED A "WHO'S WHO" OF PEOPLE INTERESTED IN THE IRISH QUESTION, THOUGH PAISLEY, CRAIG, WEST'S UNIONISTS AND THE IRA WERE ABSENT. UNDER THE CONFERENCE'S RULES ALL THE PROCEEDINGS WERE TO BE REGARDED AS CONFIDENTIAL AND OFF-THE-RECORD. THIS PROVIDED A UNIQUE FORUM FOR FRANK DISCUSSION AND A MOST DISPARATE GROUP OF PEOPLE, INFLUENCED BY THE CIVILIZING ATMOSPHERE OF OXFORD, SPOKE TO EACH OTHER ABOUT THE IRISH PROBLEM, MANY MEETING EACH OTHER AND MIXING SOCIALLY FOR THE FIRST TIME.

3. THE CONFERENCE DEMONSTRATED ONCE AGAIN THE DEPTH OF THE OLD DIFFERENCES THAT HAVE MADE IRELAND'S PROBLEMS SO INTRACTABLE, DIFFERENCES BETWEEN NORTH AND SOUTH, BETWEEN THE COMMUNITIES, AND BETWEEN THE BRITISH AND THE IRISH. UNDOUBTEDLY SOME OF THE PROTAGONISTS LEARNED A GOOD DEAL AND MANY AGREED THEY HAD GAINED NEW PERSPECTIVES ON EACH OTHER'S VIEWS. IN THIS SENSE, THE CONFERENCE WAS A GREAT SUCCESS. BUT PROLONGED DISCUSSION OF FUTURE OPTIONS OR SHARED INTERESTS YIELDED LITTLE AGREEMENT. IRISH FONSEC FITZGERALD AND OTHERS SPENT CONSIDERABLE TIME, FOR EXAMPLE, TRYING TO PERSUADE PROTESTANTS FROM THE NORTH THAT THEY STOOD TO BENEFIT FROM THE DEVELOPMENT OF CLOSE RELATIONS WITH THE SOUTH. IT WAS ARGUED THAT WHETHER OR NOT BRITAIN STAYED IN THE EC, DUBLIN'S ECONOMIC INTERESTS AND THOSE OF NI COINCIDED MORE CLOSELY THAN NI'S WITH THOSE OF BRITAIN. THIS ARGUMENT DID NOT APPEAR TO SWAY MANY ULSTER PROTESTANTS.

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 LONDON 08766 01 OF 02 121654Z

4. SEVERAL ASPECTS OF THE CONFERENCE, HOWEVER, STRUCK US AS NOTEWORTHY. ONE WAS UNIVERSAL RECOGNITION THAT THE SUCCESSFUL UWC STRIKE IN MAY HAD BEEN AN IMPORTANT EVENT IN THE EVOLUTION OF THE ULSTER POLITICAL SITUATION. IT HAD DEMONSTRATED THE POWER OF PROTESTANT WORKERS DECISIVELY TO INFLUENCE EVENTS. IT HAD HIGHLIGHTED THE FACT THAT A PROCESS HAD BEEN UNDERWAY FOR SOME TIME IN WHICH PROTESTANT WORKERS NO LONGER OFFERED AUTOMATIC ALLEGIANCE

TO A UNIONIST PARTY DOMINATED BY MIDDLE CLASS LEADERSHIP  
AND WITH MIDDLE CLASS OBJECTIVES. IT HAD CONFIRMED THE  
FRAGMENTATION OF WHAT MANY NORTHERN CATHOLICS AND IRISH  
FROM THE SOUTH HAD TENDED TO THINK OF AS A MONOLITHIC  
PROTESTANT UNITY. IT HAD OPENED CLEARLY VISIBLE PROS-

CONFIDENTIAL

NNN

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 LONDON 08766 02 OF 02 121645Z

53

ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-03 SS-20

USIA-15 IO-14 CIEP-02 ACDA-19 DRC-01 /136 W

----- 101491

R 121629Z JUL 74

FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2054

INFO AMEMBASSY DUBLIN

AMCONSUL BELFAST

AMCONSUL LIVERPOOL

AMCONSUL EDINBURGH

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 02 LONDON 08766

PECTS FOR FINDING COMMON GROUND BETWEEN THE PROTESTANT  
AND CATHOLIC WORKING CLASSES, WHO INCREASINGLY ARE SEEN  
TO HAVE IMPORTANT SHARED INTERESTS, AND THEMSELVES ARE  
BEGINNING TO BE AWARE OF THIS.

5. A SECOND FEATURE OF THE CONFERENCE WAS THE PESSIMISM  
REFLECTED BY MOST PARTICIPANTS. THERE WAS MUCH DISCUS-  
SION OF THE LIMITED OPTIONS OPEN TO THE BRITISH AND OF  
THE POOR CHANCES OF SUCCESS OF THE CONSTITUTIONAL CON-  
VENTION PROPOSED IN THE JUST-ISSUED WHITE PAPER.

6. IN MARKED CONTRAST TO LAST YEAR'S CONFERENCE, WHEN  
THERE WAS A MEASURE OF OPTIMISM THAT A POLITICAL SOLUTION  
MIGHT BE MADE TO WORK IN NI, IT WAS HARD TO FIND ANYONE  
WHO BELIEVED THAT AGREEMENT COULD BE REACHED BY THE

VARIOUS NI PARTIES ON ANY FORM OF GOVERNMENT BROADLY ACCEPTABLE BOTH IN NI AND THE UK. THOSE WHO HAD FAVORED THE GENERAL PURPOSES OF THE NI CONSTITUTION ACT AND SUNNINGDALE (THE BRITISH, MOST IRISH AND NORTHERN MODERATES), ACCEPTED THAT THE COLLAPSE OF THE NEW INSTITUTIONS HAD CREATED A GRAVE SITUATION, WHERE TIME SEEMED TO FAVOR NO ONE. THE REVERSION TO DIRECT RULE FROM WEST-CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 LONDON 08766 02 OF 02 121645Z

MINSTER WAS REGARDED AS A TEMPORARY EXPEDIENT THAT PROMISED ONLY TO INCREASE PROTESTANT ASSERTIVENESS AND LEAD TO CONDITIONS IN WHICH THE BRITISH PUBLIC WOULD BECOME INCREASINGLY ALIENATED FROM IRELAND'S PROBLEMS AND THEIR IRISH RESPONSIBILITIES. DUBLIN POLITICIANS, ULSTER REPUBLICANS AND NORTHERN MODERATES ALIKE APPEARED TO BE CONVINCED THAT SUCH ALIENATION WOULD BE FOLLOWED BY A BRITISH DISENGAGEMENT WHICH IN TURN WOULD LEAD TO SOME FORM OF CIVIL WAR.

7. FOR THEIR PART, PROTESTANT LOYALISTS AND REPRESENTATIVES OF THE UWC ALSO SAW A BLEAK FUTURE. THOUGH IMPRESSED BY THEIR OWN RECENT POLITICAL SUCCESSES, THEY DID NOT APPEAR CONFIDENT THAT A COMPROMISE COULD BE ACHIEVED. THEY RECOGNIZE THAT A SITUATION COULD DEVELOP WHICH WOULD LEAD TO WIDESPREAD CIVIL CONFLICT, DANGER TO THE PEOPLE THEY PURPORT TO REPRESENT AND, EVENTUALLY, THE CUTTING OF ULSTER'S TIES WITH BRITAIN. SOME PROTESTANTS AT THE CONFERENCE STATED THAT, AS A LAST RESORT, THEY WOULD PREFER ULSTER'S INDEPENDENCE TO ANY ARRANGEMENT THAT MIGHT LEAD TO THEIR EVENTUAL INCORPORATION IN AN IRISH STATE. BUT IT WAS CLEAR THAT THEY HAD DONE LITTLE SERIOUS HOMEWORK ABOUT THIS COURSE OF ACTION AND THAT THE POLITICAL, SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CONSEQUENCES (WHICH MANY OBSERVERS BELIEVE WOULD BE DISASTROUS) OF OPTING FOR AN INDEPENDENT ULSTER ARE ONLY JUST BARELY STARTING TO SINK IN. AND WHILE PROTESTANTS MAY BELIEVE THAT THE IRA CAN SABOTAGE BY VIOLENCE ANY POLITICAL SETTLEMENT MADE WITHOUT IT, SOME ARE BEGINNING TO RECOGNIZE THAT HOWEVER MUCH THEY WANT TO REMAIN IN THE UK, THEY HAVE NO COMPARABLE WAY OF VETOING A BRITISH DECISION TO WITHDRAW. NO MATTER HOW THEY TRY TO WORK IT OUT, THE FUTURE LOOKS DEPRESSING TO NI PROTESTANTS.

8. A THIRD ASPECT OF THE CONFERENCE WAS THE EMERGENCE OF A FAIRLY BROAD CONSENSUS BETWEEN CATHOLICS AND PROTESTANTS THAT INTERNMENT SHOULD BE ENDED AND THAT THE ARMY SHOULD LOWER ITS PROFILE. EVER SINCE PROTESTANT EXTREMISTS STARTED TO BE INTERNED IN ANY NUMBERS, AND PARTICULARLY SINCE THE UWC STRIKE IN MAY, SOME PROTESTANT POLITICIANS, NOW SUBJECT TO THE SAME PRESSURES AS CATHO-

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 LONDON 08766 02 OF 02 121645Z

LIC ONES, HAVE JOINED CATHOLICS IN OPPOSING INTERNMENT. AT THE CONFERENCE, SPOKESMEN OF VARIOUS COLORATIONS ARGUED THAT AN END TO INTERNMENT MIGHT PROVIDE THE CATALYST NECESSARY TO GET THE TWO COMMUNITIES STARTED TOWARDS WORKING TOGETHER ON THE MANY REAL PROBLEMS THAT AFFECT THEM BOTH. SUCH SENTIMENTS ARE THOUGHT TO HAVE INFLUENCED THE GOVERNMENT'S DECISION THIS WEEK TO ANNOUNCE THAT LIMITED NUMBERS OF INTERNEES WERE TO BE RELEASED, PROVIDING THIS DID NOT RESULT IN A DETERIORATION OF THE SECURITY SITUATION. HOWEVER, BRITISH OFFICIALS (ALSO REFLECTING THE VIEWS OF THE ARMY) WHO HAVE BEEN WRESTLING WITH THE PROBLEMS OF SECURITY AND INTERNMENT ARE VERY SKEPTICAL THAT THIS PROVISIO CAN BE MET. THEY BELIEVE THAT THE REIEASE OF MANY OF THE KNOWN MURDERERS NOW IN DETENTION, IS THE EQUIVALENT OF SIGNING OPEN DEATH WARRANTS FOR MANY NI CITIZENS. THEY DOUBT THAT THE GOOD WILL WHICH THE ENDING OF INTERNMENT MIGHT PRODUCE COULD BE MORE THAN TEMPORARY.

SOH

CONFIDENTIAL

NNN

## Message Attributes

**Automatic Decaptioning:** X  
**Capture Date:** 01 JAN 1994  
**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Current Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
**Concepts:** NORTHERN IRELAND, POLICIES, POLITICAL STABILITY, LABOR, NATIONAL ELECTIONS, POLITICAL SITUATION  
**Control Number:** n/a  
**Copy:** SINGLE  
**Draft Date:** 12 JUL 1974  
**Decaption Date:** 01 JAN 1960  
**Decaption Note:**  
**Disposition Action:** RELEASED  
**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
**Disposition Authority:** martinml  
**Disposition Case Number:** n/a  
**Disposition Comment:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
**Disposition Date:** 28 MAY 2004  
**Disposition Event:**  
**Disposition History:** n/a  
**Disposition Reason:**  
**Disposition Remarks:**  
**Document Number:** 1974LONDON08766  
**Document Source:** CORE  
**Document Unique ID:** 00  
**Drafter:** n/a  
**Enclosure:** n/a  
**Executive Order:** GS  
**Errors:** N/A  
**Film Number:** D740187-0022  
**From:** LONDON  
**Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Image Path:**  
**ISecure:** 1  
**Legacy Key:** link1974/newtext/t19740754/aaaabuau.tel  
**Line Count:** 249  
**Locator:** TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM  
**Office:** ACTION EUR  
**Original Classification:** CONFIDENTIAL  
**Original Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Original Previous Classification:** n/a  
**Original Previous Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Page Count:** 5  
**Previous Channel Indicators:**  
**Previous Classification:** CONFIDENTIAL  
**Previous Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Reference:** LONDON 8497  
**Review Action:** RELEASED, APPROVED  
**Review Authority:** martinml  
**Review Comment:** n/a  
**Review Content Flags:**  
**Review Date:** 20 JUL 2001  
**Review Event:**  
**Review Exemptions:** n/a  
**Review History:** RELEASED <20-Jul-2001 by kellerpr>; APPROVED <26 FEB 2003 by martinml>  
**Review Markings:**

Declassified/Released  
US Department of State  
EO Systematic Review  
30 JUN 2005

**Review Media Identifier:**  
**Review Referrals:** n/a  
**Review Release Date:** n/a  
**Review Release Event:** n/a  
**Review Transfer Date:**  
**Review Withdrawn Fields:** n/a  
**Secure:** OPEN  
**Status:** NATIVE  
**Subject:** NORTHERN IRELAND: GROWING PESSIMISM  
**TAGS:** PINT, PFOR, UK, EI  
**To:** STATE  
**Type:** TE  
**Markings:** Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005